

Stevenage Borough Council

Biodiversity Duty Report

March 2026



Contents

Section 1: Introduction.....	3
Section 2: Your policies, objectives and actions	4
Local Plan Partial Update 2011 – 2031	4
Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)	7
Legal Context	8
Delivery Mechanisms	8
Section 3: Your future actions.....	8
Section 4: Biodiversity net gain information	9
Section 5: Information about your Authority	13
Section 6: Examples of BNG in the Borough.....	15
Section 7: Other strategies	16
Section 8: How have the Council raised awareness and educated the community	16
Section 9: Conclusion.....	17

Section 1: Introduction

- 1.1 Biodiversity is essential to the health, resilience, and long-term sustainability of our natural environment. Public authorities have a statutory responsibility to consider, conserve, and enhance biodiversity in the exercise of their functions. This duty, strengthened by the Environment Act 2021, requires organisations to integrate biodiversity into decision-making, policy development, land management, planning, and service delivery.
- 1.2 Within the planning system, Biodiversity Net Gain is an approach to development. It makes sure that habitats for wildlife are left in a measurably better state than they were before the development.
- 1.3 In England, BNG is mandatory under [Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 \(as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021\)](#).
- 1.4 Developments must deliver a BNG of 10%. This means a development will result in more or enhanced natural habitat than there was before development.
- 1.5 Mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) came in to force for major developments on the 12 February 2024 and minor developments on the 2 April 2024. For the purposes of BNG, biodiversity value is measured in standardised biodiversity units. This is quantified within this report to show the breakdown of biodiversity mitigation from development. The reporting period for the Council's first Duty Report, is from the 12 February 2024 to 1 January 2026.
- 1.6 This Biodiversity Duty Report sets out how the authority has met these obligations during the reporting period. The report will show:
 - What actions the council has taken;
 - How the council has integrated biodiversity into their functions;
 - What outcomes have been achieved (e.g data on habitats);
 - Future plans for enhancement.

This creates transparency and accountability.

- 1.7 By documenting progress and identifying opportunities for further improvement, this report demonstrates the authority's commitment to playing an active role in reversing biodiversity decline and supporting a thriving, resilient natural environment for current and future generations.

Section 2: Your policies, objectives and actions

Local Plan Partial Update 2011 – 2031

- 2.1. The Local Plan is a statutory planning document that every local authority in England must produce. It sets out a vision and strategy for the local area considering where development should go, what should be protected and how places should grow over a 15-to-20-year period.
- 2.2. Stevenage Borough Council undertook a partial update of their Local Plan in 2024 – 2025 to ensure the policies remained effective and up to date. The Local Plan was examined in Public in December 2025 to review if these updates were sound. Subject to Main Modifications, the Partial Update is proposed for Adoption in 2026.
- 2.3. Local Planning Authorities are required to review their plans every five years and the review identified that while areas remained sound, several policies relating to climate change and sustainable drainage required strengthening.
- 2.4. The Partial Update introduces:
- A new strategic climate change policy
 - A new chapter of detailed climate change policies
 - Revised policies on sustainable drainage and flood risk
- 2.5. These changes strengthen the plan’s approach to environmental resilience and ecological protection.
- 2.6. Table 1 shows an overview of the Local Plan policy areas, and the actions needed to achieve its objectives.

Table 1:

Policy Area	Objectives	Actions
Housing	- Meet revised housing targets - Provide affordable & specialist homes	- Build out housing allocations - Strengthen affordable housing requirements - Support mixed-tenure developments
Town Centre	- Regenerate Stevenage town centre - Create vibrant mixed-use hub	- Encourage retail, leisure & office redevelopment - Flexible use of retail space - Support cultural venues
Transport	- Promote sustainable travel - Reduce car dependency	- Expand cycling & walking networks - Improve bus & rail integration - Require sustainable transport plans for new developments
Environment & Climate	- Achieve biodiversity net gain - Reduce carbon emissions - Increase resilience to climate	- Encourage renewable energy standards - Protect & enhance green belt - Require sustainable design in new builds – protect

	change – enhancing our natural environment	open space – enhance Biodiversity and wildlife habitats.
Economy & Employment	- Support local jobs & innovation - Protect employment land	- Safeguard key employment sites - Encourage investment in tech & innovation sectors - Flexible workspace provision
Community & Wellbeing	- Enhance quality of life - Protect heritage & green spaces	- Improve parks & open spaces - Support community facilities - Strengthen heritage protection policies

2.7. Under the Environment Act 2021, public authorities must

- Conserve and enhance biodiversity,
- Embed biodiversity into decision making, and
- Produce a biodiversity duty report showing how they have done so.

2.8. The Partial Update supports these duties by:

- Embedding biodiversity considerations into spatial planning through the updated environmental and climate policies, which ensure that biodiversity is a consideration in development decisions.
- Strengthening requirements for nature-based solutions with revised sustainable drainage and flood-risk policies to promote multifunctional green infrastructure, which supports habitats and species.
- Supporting long-term ecological resilience with climate-focused policies which help to ensure that development contributes to adaptation and mitigation, which is essential for protecting biodiversity under changing climate conditions.
- The statutory five-year review requirement ensures that biodiversity-related policies are not static but are periodically refreshed to reflect new evidence and national policy shifts.

2.9. The Stevenage Local Plan Partial Update strengthens the Council’s ability to meet its biodiversity duty by updating key environmental, climate change, and sustainable drainage policies to ensure they remain effective, evidence-based, and aligned with national requirements. The update embeds biodiversity considerations across the plan, promotes nature-based solutions, supports ecological resilience, and ensures that biodiversity is integrated into development management and strategic planning decisions.

Biodiversity Action Plan (2024–2028): A Wilder Stevenage

2.10. Biodiversity is the variety of life all around us, from garden insects to ancient trees, found everywhere from window boxes to wild landscapes. It underpins our daily lives, providing clean air and water, fertile soil, food, climate regulation, and contributing to our economy, health, wellbeing and quality of life.

2.11. In the last 50 years, 76 species (1% of those assessed) became extinct in Hertfordshire; more than three species every two years. Of these, 35 were invertebrates, 26 were plants, 13 were vertebrates and 2 were lichens. A total of 1,446 species (19% of those assessed) are currently threatened with extinction in

Hertfordshire. This includes over 1,000 invertebrates and 260 plants. A Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) is a strategic document, developed at national or local levels, to protect, conserve, and enhance the variety of life (species, habitats, ecosystems) by setting specific goals, identifying priority areas, and outlining actions. Its core purpose is to reverse nature's decline, manage the environment better, and creating a healthy natural legacy for future generations through collaboration and targeted efforts.

2.12. The focus and objectives of the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) are:

Habitat Focus: Grasslands, woodlands, hedgerows, wetlands, and urban green spaces.
Key Objective: Enhance habitats, connectivity and ecological networks.

2.13. This plan outlines strategic actions across various habitat types to support biodiversity shown in the Table 2:

Table 2:

Habitat	Actions
Grasslands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Enhance species-rich grasslands and roadside verges. ○ Promote sustainable mowing regimes and wildflower planting.
Woodlands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Improve woodland structure and connectivity. ○ Encourage native tree planting and sustainable woodland management.
Ancient Hedgerows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Protect and restore hedgerows using traditional techniques. ○ Promote hedgerow surveys and community involvement.
Wetlands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Restore ponds, streams, and wetland habitats. ○ Improve water quality and support aquatic species.
Neighbourhood Nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Increase green infrastructure in urban areas. ○ Support community-led biodiversity projects and education

Climate Adaptation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Integrate biodiversity into climate resilience strategies. ○ Promote nature-based solutions to mitigate climate impacts. ○ Promote native species and reduce invasive species. ○ Support climate resilience through nature-based solutions. ○ Engage communities in biodiversity education and stewardship.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

- 2.14. BNG has replaced the Council's Biodiversity. Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is a UK legal requirement under the Environment Act 2021 ensuring most new developments leave habitats measurably better for wildlife, typically requiring a 10% increase in biodiversity. This came into effect in February 2024
- 2.15. Before development begins, an ecologist carries out a baseline survey. This survey maps and measures all the habitats and their condition on the site, such as grassland, trees, ponds, or hedgerows.
- 2.16. On developments that require BNG (there are exemptions), these existing habitats, along with post- development habitats (including buildings, roads, and landscaped areas), are entered into a government-designed spreadsheet. This spreadsheet uses carefully calculated formulas to work out how much habitat will be lost or gained with the development.
- 2.17. Any habitat loss must be fully replaced by the same habitat or one of higher distinctiveness, and in addition the developer must deliver at least an extra 10% biodiversity gain. This means the finished project should support more wildlife than the site did before development started.
- 2.18. Habitats can be enhanced or newly created, either:
- on the development site itself (this is the preferred option),
 - elsewhere within the local planning authority, or
 - outside the planning authority area
- 2.19. The further away the replacement habitat is (the less favourable it is in the calculations), the greater the area and/or quality of habitat needs to be created to replace it. All habitat creation or enhancement is paid for by the developer.
- 2.20. These habitats are secured through a legal agreement for 30 years during which time they are monitored on a regular basis to ensure compliance.
- 2.21. Every planning authority must publish data on the previous five years of development requiring BNG within its boundary. The first reporting period from implementation is shorter, covering from February 2024 to January 2026. Reports must outline actions

taken to comply with the biodiversity duty, including quantitative data on biodiversity gains (measured in units), off-site/on-site gains, and future planned actions.

2.22. BNG has replaced the Council's Biodiversity In line with the Environment Act. Developments (depending on scale) must deliver a minimum 10% net gain in biodiversity.

Implementation:

- On-site or off-site habitat creation/restoration.
- Legal agreements to secure 30-year habitat management.
- Monitoring and reporting mechanisms.

2.23. Stevenage requires:

- **Minimum 10% Net Gain**
 - Developments must deliver at least 10% biodiversity net gain.
- **30-Year Habitat Management**
 - Long-term plans must be secured via legal agreements or conservation covenants.
- **On-site or Off-site Delivery**
 - Biodiversity improvements can be delivered locally or via national credit schemes.

Legal Context

2.24. Under Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006, public authorities must consider biodiversity in all their functions. Stevenage Borough Council fulfils this duty through strategic planning, development control, and community engagement.

Delivery Mechanisms

2.25. Delivery Mechanisms include:

- Planning Conditions and Obligations: Enforce biodiversity enhancements through Section 106 agreements and planning conditions.
- Partnerships: Collaborate with Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust, Hertfordshire County Council, local schools, and community groups.
- Monitoring: Track progress via habitat surveys, ecological reports, and public feedback.

Section 3: Your future actions

3.1. Stevenage Borough Councils plans to fulfil the biodiversity duty over the next five years by:

- Monitoring BNG units for all relevant developments through specialised software.
- Ensure biodiversity training is incorporated for all staff.
- Annual ecological surveys carried out at key sites where necessary.
- Use GIS mapping to track changes over time.

- Establish enhanced habitat and maintain habitats already created on Stevenage Borough Council lands.

Section 4: Biodiversity net gain information

- 4.1. Gain plans are a requirement of planning approval. They are required when a planning application triggers BNG and doesn't come under any of the exemption categories. A biodiversity gain plan is a document where in a single document it shows how a development will achieve 10% biodiversity net gain. It sets out responsible parties, the on-site and off-site units of the pre- and post- development biodiversity and cites the documents that support this data.
- 4.2. Within Stevenage Borough Council between the start dates of 12th February 2024 for major developments and 2nd April 2024 for minor developments, and the end date of 1st January 2026 there have been 10 applications that required BNG and 5 approved gain plans. Out of the 5 approved gain plans, 4 include both on- and off- site habitat enhancements and 1 has on-site enhancements only. There were no applications that secured biodiversity uplift through statutory credits.
- 4.3. Statutory credits are the least favourable way to achieve the required net gain. They are credits bought from the government which are then used for their biodiversity projects. They are priced to make them unattractive to developers.
- 4.4. The following tables were created by DEFRA as a template for local planning authority statutory reporting of BNG data and have been completed with data from Stevenage Borough Council planning authority.
- 4.5. The losses and gains of biodiversity by area habitat type are in Table 3. These figures are for the approved gain plans only and include both on-site and off-site from within and without the borough. Cropland and individual trees show losses in area whilst grassland, heathland and urban show gains. As regards unit change apart from cropland all other relevant habitats show a unit gain. There is a net gain of 1 habitat unit from the 5 gain plans.
- 4.6. The difference between the positive and negative unit and the positive and negative area change can be explained by an increase in condition of the proposed habitats resulting in an increase in proposed units, whilst the area may still decrease.

Table 3: Combined On- and Off-site Baseline vs Post-Development Biodiversity and Habitat Area by Habitat Type

Habitat Type - Area	Total biodiversity units at baseline	Total hectares at baseline	Total biodiversity units post - development	Total hectares post - development	Net change in biodiversity units	Net change in hectares
Cropland	0.51	0.18	0	0	-0.510	-0.180
Grassland	0.65	0.2	1.91	0.353	1.260	0.153
Heathland and Scrub	0	0	0.45	0.071	0.450	0.071
Lakes	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000
Sparsely Vegetated Land	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000
Urban	0.17	0.31	0.12	0.4	-0.050	0.090
Wetland	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000
Woodland and Forest	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000
Intertidal sediment	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000
Coastal Saltmarsh	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000
Rocky Shore	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000
Coastal Lagoons	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000
Intertidal Hard Structures	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.000
Watercourse footprint	not applicable		not applicable		not applicable	
Individual Trees	1.18	0.15	1.03	0.19	-0.15	0.04
Total	2.51	0.84	3.51	1.01	1.00	0.17

4.7. The losses and gains of biodiversity by linear habitat type are in Table 4. This shows a gain in hedgerow habitat.

Table 4: Combined On- and Off-site Baseline vs Post-Development Biodiversity and Habitat length by Habitat Type

ID	Habitat type - hedgerows and lines of trees	Total units at baseline	Total kilometers at baseline	Total units post - development	Total kilometers post - development	Net change in units	Net change in kilometers
A	Species-rich native hedgerow with trees - associated with bank or ditch						
B	Species-rich native hedgerow with trees						
C	Species-rich native hedgerow - associated with bank or ditch						
D	Native hedgerow with trees - associated with bank or ditch						
E	Species -rich native hedgerow						
F	Native hedgerow - associated with bank or ditch						
G	Native hedgerow with trees	0	0	0.11	0.04	0.11	0.04
H	Ecologically valuable line of trees						
I	Ecologically valuable line of trees - associated with bank or ditch						
J	Native hedgerow						
K	Line of trees						
L	Line of trees associated with bank or ditch						
M	Non-native and ornamental hedgerow						
	Total	0	0	0.11	0.04	0.11	0.04

4.8. Table 5 Shows that 96% of the off-site biodiversity units within the 5 approved gain plans were located out of Stevenage LPA boundary.

Table 5: Location of off-site biodiversity units

Location of off-site biodiversity units	Total	Proportion
Number of off-site biodiversity units located inside LPA boundary or NCA of impact site.	0.04	0.037
Number of off-site biodiversity units located outside LPA or NCA of impact site, but in neighbouring LPA or NCA	0	0
Number of off-site biodiversity units located outside of LPA or NCA of impact site and neighbouring LPA or NCA	1.03	0.963

4.9. In summary, out of a total of 1.11 units gained from development gain plans between 12th Feb 2024 and 1st Jan 2026, 1.03 were bought from outside the Stevenage Local Authority boundary and 0.08 were created within the boundary.

4.10. Stevenage developments at present have led to a loss of mainly grassland, hedges, scrub and individual trees.

4.11. Off-site gain sites for developments within Stevenage are located in North Yorkshire, Lincolnshire and Surrey.

4.12. The reasons for the imbalance in the number of units created within and without the borough council boundaries are due to the location of gain sites (habitat banks). Gain sites are areas of land where new habitats – like meadows, woodlands, hedgerows, and

ponds – are strategically added and managed for the long term (initially 30 years) to create greater biodiversity. This area can be divided into habitat units. These units can then be sold to developers to compensate for habitats lost because of the development.

- 4.13. Gains sites can be created through a landowner having an s106 agreement with a Local Authority (LA), or by having a conservation covenant (legal agreement) with a Responsible Body (a government recognised and registered organisation), or an LA having a conservation covenant or s106 with a neighbouring LA, or potentially with another separate department within the same LA. The legal agreement lasts for 30 years. The land for the gain site must be mapped, measured and surveyed; and a gain plan and a habitat management and monitoring plan must be created. This site can then be registered with the government as a gain site. Once registered, the gain site cannot be changed for 30 years except in exceptional circumstances and with application to the Secretary of State. The habitat units can then be sold. The LPA or Responsible Body would then oversee and ensure the gain site is being managed correctly by reviewing monitoring reports.
- 4.14. There are no gain sites at present in Hertfordshire. There are three that will be on-line soon, two in North Herts District Council which is a collaboration between North Herts and HCC, and one in St Albans City and District Council.
- 4.15. Biodiversity Net Gain monetises nature in very specific terms dependent on habitat type, size, distinctiveness, condition, location and whether it is included in the Local Nature Recovery Strategy. Gain site habitat unit pricing then depends on the market values and the availability of the habitat. The most expensive to buy at present are watercourse units at an average of £203,861 per unit. The least expensive is Other Neutral Grassland at an average of £24,098 per unit. These costs reflect the cost to create, maintain and monitor the habitat over 30 years. The greater the number of gain sites coming online will probably lead to the reduction in these prices. General opinion at present is that supply will outstrip demand. Local gain sites would have an advantage within the metric for local developments, but they would still have to price competitively to ensure this advantage is not undercut from gain sites elsewhere. Nearly 5,000 hectares in England are now set aside for restoration and measurable biodiversity uplift.
- 4.16. Stevenage recognises the benefit of retaining habitat within its boundaries via gain sites for the town and its communities. The team are at present in the process of assessing the feasibility of creating, maintaining and monitoring gain sites for 30 years within the borough. The considerations include legal, financial, resource capacity, location, viable scale, achievable habitat type and condition, and the BNG market. There is no guarantee that a gain site will return its outlay from the market.
- 4.17. There has been little evidence that BNG is slowing the planning process.

Section 5: Information about your Authority

5.1. Stevenage Borough Council is a district level local authority responsible for delivering a wide range of public services. Its core functions include:

- Planning and development management, including preparing and implementing the Local Plan and working through planning applications within the Borough.
- Housing management, including council-owned homes and estates.
- Environmental services, such as open spaces, parks, waste and recycling.
- Community services, including leisure, culture and public health initiatives.
- Regulatory Services such as environmental health and licensing.

5.2. Stevenage is a compact, urban borough of around 25 km² with a population of approximately 90,000 people. The Council manages a significant portfolio of housing estates, parks, green spaces, and community assets across the borough.

How Stevenage Borough Council Can Affect Biodiversity

5.3. Table 6 below shows how the Council works to regulate its impact on the environment.

Table 6:

Council Operation	Positive or Negative impacts on Biodiversity
<p>➤ <u>Land and Estates Management</u></p> <p>The Council manages a network of parks, woodlands, green corridors, amenity grassland, and local nature sites.</p>	<p>Biodiversity can be affected through: Positive impacts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Habitat creation and enhancement ○ Sustainable management of parks and open spaces ○ Protection of designated sites and wildlife corridors <p>Possible negative impacts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Intensive maintenance regimes, if not managed; ○ Loss of habitat through redevelopment of council-owned land. <p>The Council work to ensure biodiversity is managed appropriately.</p>
<p>➤ <u>Planning and Development Decisions</u></p>	<p>As the local planning authority, the Council has a major influence on biodiversity through:</p> <p>Positive impacts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Requiring biodiversity net gain; ○ Protecting designated sites and green infrastructure; ○ Embedding climate change policies in the Local Plan and its partial update. <p>Possible Negative impacts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Development pressure on greenfield land if not managed; ○ Fragmentation of habitats if not properly mitigated.
<p>➤ <u>Advice and Guidance</u></p> <p>The Council provides advice to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Developers (e.g., pre-application guidance on biodiversity requirements) ● Landowners and community groups ● Internal teams (e.g., housing, estates, and regeneration) 	<p>This advice can promote biodiversity-positive practices or, if insufficient, lead to missed opportunities for enhancement.</p>
<p>➤ <u>Raising Awareness in the Community</u></p>	<p>The Council influences biodiversity through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Public engagement campaigns ● Support for volunteer groups and “friends of” organisations ● Events, education programmes, and community planting schemes <p>These activities help build understanding and support for nature recovery.</p>
<p>➤ <u>Environmental Impact of Council Operations</u></p> <p>The Council's environmental policies and climate strategies help minimise negative impacts and maximise opportunities for biodiversity enhancement.</p>	<p>Council operations can affect biodiversity through:</p> <p>Positive impacts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sustainable procurement ○ Low-carbon initiatives ○ Nature-based climate adaptation measures <p>Possible Negative impacts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Vehicle emissions; ○ Use of chemicals or pesticides; ○ Construction and maintenance activities. <p>Therefore, the Council works to ensure its strategies and operations work to ensure biodiversity is properly mitigated</p>

Section 6: Examples of BNG in the Borough

- 6.1. The Council achieved several significant biodiversity improvements during the reporting period. This included adopting both the Green Spaces Strategy and the Tree and Woodland Strategy, each with measures to enhance habitats, increase ecological resilience, and support long-term nature recovery.
- 6.2. Fishers Green – the slope on the sound barrier has been planted with 48 scrub trees and plants including Wych Elm (*Ulmus glabra*), Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*), Box (*Buxus sempervirens*) and Wayfaring Tree (*Viburnum lantana*) to create an area of approximately 0.2ha of mixed scrub and individual trees. The top and bottom of the grassy banks, at present dominated with False-oat grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*) will be enhanced as meadow.
- 6.3. Ecological evidence continued to guide decision-making. A detailed ecological survey was commissioned to inform habitat improvements at Fishers Green Pond, and a comprehensive bat survey at Fairlands Valley Park is guiding lighting proposals to protect nocturnal species. The survey confirmed the park as a site of county-level importance for bats, with 10 of Hertfordshire's 12 species recorded
- 6.4. A programme of specialist orchard-management training was delivered, alongside ongoing implementation of Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) actions over the winter period, including targeted pond and meadow restoration.
- 6.5. New species-rich meadows were established at Fairlands Southfield and St Nicholas Park, complementing extensive bulb-planting across multiple sites—introducing naturalised swathes of crocus, snowdrop, narcissus, and tulip to enhance early-season pollinator support.
- 6.6. Tree-planting initiatives progressed with the creation of three micro-woodlands at St Nicks, Hampson, and Shephalbury Park. Three additional sites are currently under development at Stebbings Farm, Chells Park, and Peartree Park.
- 6.7. Work to address invasive Himalayan balsam also advanced: the Environment Agency is investigating the deployment of a rust fungus trial at Wychdell Flood Meadow. We also developed a close partnership with the River Beane Restoration Association to coordinate action along Stevenage Brook.
- 6.8. To strengthen monitoring, reporting, and delivery of the Biodiversity Action Plan, the Council adopted the Kausal software platform, enabling clearer oversight of progress and improved data management.
- 6.9. The annual butterfly survey—delivered by Green Space Volunteers—recorded the highest counts to date, demonstrating both a thriving monitoring network and encouraging signs for local species populations.
- 6.10. BNG / UKHab surveys were carried out at the Shackledell extension at Fairlands Valley Park (other neutral grassland of moderate condition) and Lantern Wood (other

woodland: mixed of moderate condition). The Shackledell extension was modified grassland and has been seeded with native wildflower seeds.

Section 7: Other strategies

- 7.1. The Hertfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) provides a countywide, evidence-based framework for identifying the most important areas for nature recovery and the actions needed to restore habitats and species. As a district level authority within Hertfordshire, Stevenage Borough Council must take account of the LNRS when exercising its biodiversity duty under the Environment Act 2021.
- 7.2. Stevenage will use the LNRS to guide how biodiversity is embedded across its functions. This includes:
 - **Aligning local policies and strategies**—such as the Local Plan Partial Update, Green Infrastructure Strategy, and climate adaptation work—with LNRS priorities and opportunity areas
 - **Ensuring planning decisions** reflect the LNRS’s spatial priorities for habitat creation, enhancement, and connectivity
 - **Using LNRS mapping and evidence** to inform assessments of development proposals, especially regarding biodiversity net gain and habitat connectivity.
- 7.3. Stevenage Borough Council will consider the Hertfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) by aligning its policies, land management, planning decisions, and community engagement activities with the LNRS’s priorities and opportunity areas. The LNRS provides the strategic framework that guides how the Council contributes to nature recovery, supports biodiversity net gain, and embeds ecological enhancement across its functions as part of its statutory biodiversity duty.
- 7.4. Biodiversity considerations will also be aligned with:
 - the Council’s Biodiversity Action Plan: A Wilder Stevenage 2024–2028
 - the Council’s Woodland and Tree Strategy 2025 – 2035
 - the Council’s Stevenage Climate Change Strategy (September 2020) and
 - Making Stevenage Even Better: Corporate Plan 2024–2027 (April 2024).

Section 8: How have the Council raised awareness and educated the community

- 8.1. There is a local volunteering group called the Stevenage Green Space Volunteers, run by SBC Green Spaces team. Volunteer events are often planned and implemented within the recommendations of the BAP to either create environments or maintain them. There are a variety of activities such as tree planting, wildflower seed sowing, pond maintenance, coppicing etc. The volunteers are trained on the practical skills to achieve these tasks but also informed of the background and reasoning for the work and

outcome involved.

- 8.2. There is a recently launched Stevenage Borough Council website (<https://www.climate.stevenage.gov.uk/biodiversity>) that explains biodiversity, the local BAP, and what stages the BAP recommendations are at regarding planning and implementation. The information from the BNG duty report will be incorporated into the webpages to enable easy access.
- 8.3. There are local SBC events such as Stevenage Day and Teddy Bears Picnic. In 2025 the theme was Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics and within this there were activities for children and adults that explore biodiversity.

Section 9: Conclusion

- 9.1. Stevenage Borough Council has taken significant steps to conserve and enhance biodiversity across the borough.
- 9.2. The next five-year period will focus on strengthening ecological networks, improving monitoring, and embedding biodiversity further into strategic decision-making.